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aikorns
AIKEN AUDUBON SOCIETY

IS IT A SHARP-SHINNED OR A COOPER'S?

by *Debbie Barnes*

IT'S WINTER TIME, WHEN WE SEE MORE ACCIPITERS AT OUR FEEDERS. We can be upset that they're hunting our birds, or we can take the time to enjoy how they move and how the other birds react to their presence. The accipiter doesn't always win!



Can you ID these birds? It can be really hard to tell Sharp-shinned Hawks from Cooper's Hawks. They look very much alike, and even overlap in size! So how do we tell them apart?

The first thing to do is to identify it as an accipiter. An accipiter is a forest hawk that mostly preys on birds. They have short rounded wings and long tails that allow them to fly agilely between the trees.

Next you must determine if the accipiter is an adult or an immature bird. Adult accipiters have red and white barred breasts and reddish brown eyes whereas immature accipiters have brown streaked breasts and orange eyes. Please note that there are always intermediate birds that are molting into their adult plumage, with their eyes becoming more red than orange.

Now to tell the difference between a Sharp-shinned and a Cooper's.

First, size isn't much help. For one thing, it's subjective. Unless you have an object of known size for comparison, you can be very wrong! Also, the two species' sizes overlap. Sharp-shinned Hawks average 10 to 14 inches long, while Cooper's Hawks average 14 to 20 inches. Happily, other characteristics are very useful.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE QUIET OF WINTER

Unlike some people, I enjoy the quiet winter months following the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. I tend to settle down and hibernate, watching the world pass outside my window while enjoying a cup of hot chocolate with marshmallows. Others choose to chase a rarity when it shows up in winter.

One advantage to this quiet contemplation is time to watch the feeders outside my window. With no effort on my part, I enjoy visits from jays—this year including a number of Steller's Jays—as well as flickers, nuthatches, juncos, house finches and others. I can watch them chatter, squabble and feed.

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Coming programs

JANUARY 16

Raptor ID

Presented by Debbie Barnes

FEBRUARY 20

To be announced. Check website for information. This is also our annual "Death by Chocolate" event.

MARCH 13 (2ND WEDNESDAY!)

Rocky Mountain Hummingbirds

Presented by Tena and Fred Engleman

APRIL 17

Beyond Birds: The Rewards of Bugwatching

Presented by Eric Eaton

Newsletter articles

Articles, announcements, or other items of special interest to Aiken Audubon members are welcomed for consideration. We'd love to hear from you!

Deadline for the March./April 2013 issue of *Aikorns* is Wednesday, February 20.

Contact the editor, Leslie Holzmann, at aikenaudubon@gmail.com, or call (719) 964-3197.

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JANUARY 16 / DEBBIE BARNES

RAPTOR ID

WANT TO FIGURE OUT WHICH HAWK THAT IS IN YOUR BACKYARD?
How about the hawk along the highway?

Colorado has 18 non-rare species of diurnal raptors. Debbie Barnes will be presenting an information-packed program explaining how to identify Colorado's eagles (*right*), hawks, falcons and kites. Debbie has been studying the identification of these birds for ten years and has developed a program to help separate the various species. Here is your chance to learn the tips that will greatly improve your skills. Don't miss this outstanding program. Then, you can put your new skills into practice by signing up for the Raptor ID field trips in January and June, and the Eagle Days trip in February.

Debbie has been birding and photographing birds for ten years. She is currently the program chair and a field trip leader for Aiken. In addition, she volunteers for Colorado State Parks, Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II and several Christmas Bird Counts. She has taught raptor identification classes at Cheyenne Mountain State Park, spoken at meetings of Colorado State Parks Raptor Monitors and taught a birding class at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.



FEBRUARY 20

TO BE ANNOUNCED

SAVE THE DATE. THE PROGRAM TOPIC AND SPEAKER WILL BE POSTED ON OUR WEBSITE, www.aikenaudubon.com, as soon as it is confirmed. Meanwhile, be thinking about what you might contribute to our annual "Death by Chocolate" potluck dessert that evening. Mmm... chocolate!

MARCH 13 / TENA AND FRED ENGLEMAN

HUMMINGBIRDS OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Please note: the March program will be one week early, on March 13, due to a room scheduling conflict.

Aiken Audubon programs are free and open to the public. They are held at the Colorado State Division of Wildlife building located at 4255 Sinton Road. Coffee and socializing is at 6:30 pm and programs begin at 7 pm. Please use the back entrance. **NOTE:** Sinton Road runs parallel to I-25 on the east side, between Garden of the Gods Road and Fillmore Street.

President's Message, continued from front page

That is the beauty about this hobby we call "birding." There is room for everyone: the hard core chaser and lister, the one who simply enjoys the birds visiting the feeder, and everyone in between. I like listening to others tell their birding stories. Each story is as unique as the story teller. And that is what the winter months are for—listening to the stories and learning from each other and the world around us. The Christmas Bird Count taught me that, and I look forward to learning and listening more in 2013. Please join me on one of the many field trips Aiken Audubon hosts and/or come to one of our monthly meetings. You never know what you might learn or hear.

Christine Bucher,
Aiken Audubon President

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Aiken Audubon Field Trips & Events

Everyone is welcome on Aiken field trips, regardless of experience level or membership in Audubon. Contact trip leader for details and to let them know you are coming. Don't forget to pack your binoculars, scope (if you have one), field guide, water, snack or lunch, hat, rain gear, sun screen, bug spray, camera(?), and some gas money for the drivers. No dogs are allowed on Aiken trips.

Note: In cases of extreme weather, trips may be cancelled. If this might be a possibility, please contact the trip leader an hour before the scheduled meeting time. To receive e-mailed reminders of upcoming field trips, send your name and e-mail address to aikenaudubon@gmail.com.

BIRDS AND ICE PHOTOGRAPHY FIELD TRIP

DECEMBER 29 AND JANUARY 12, 8 AM – NOON

Winter birding can be pretty exciting, and these two trips should provide excellent opportunities for photographers as well. We'll travel to Lake George and into Eleven Mile Canyon looking for both eagle species, waterfowl, and American Dippers. Non-photographers are welcome, but note that the trip will be slow-paced while we spend time photographing birds.

Be prepared for snow and ice; bring food and water as needed. We will not be hiking very far, but you may want waterproof and insulated clothing to protect your legs and backside! Photographers bring tripods for scenic opportunities. Digiscopers are welcome; bring long lenses if you have them.

Further details are on the Aiken website.

For more information and to RSVP, contact Debbie Barnes at kfoopoh@yahoo.com or (c) 303.947.0566.



RAPTOR ID FIELD TRIP

JANUARY 19 OR 20, 8 AM – 2 PM

This is a one day trip with two dates to choose from. Practice your skills in Raptor ID after Aiken Audubon's annual Raptor ID program. We'll drive out to Eastern El Paso County, where everyone will have a chance to practice IDing raptors with scopes. Bring your long lenses if you have them.

Meet at Fountain Creek Nature Center to car pool. Further details are on the Aiken website.

For more information and to RSVP, contact Debbie Barnes at kfoopoh@yahoo.com or (c) 303.947.0566.

FCNC WINTER BIRD COUNT

JANUARY 12, 8:30 – 11 AM

Beginning to advanced birders are invited to observe and record the numbers of bird species and populations found in Fountain Creek Regional Park.

Sponsored by Fountain Creek Nature Center, \$5 fee (for birdseed), reservations required, (719) 520-6745.

More trips online!

For the latest information on field trips and events:

www.AikenAudubon.com

HAWK IDENTIFICATION FIELD TRIP

JANUARY 26, 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Join a naturalist birder on a field trip through El Paso County to see and identify winter resident raptors. Bring binoculars if you have them. This trip follows an optional class on Hawk ID offered Friday, January 25, from 7 to 8:30 pm, at Bear Creek Nature Center.

Sponsored by Fountain Creek Nature Center. Class fee of \$8 for Nature Center members/\$10 for nonmembers, reservations required, 520-6387. Fieldtrip fee of \$5 for Nature Center members, \$7 for nonmembers, reservations required, 520-6745.

17TH ANNUAL EAGLE DAY FESTIVAL AT LAKE PUEBLO STATE PARK

FEBRUARY 2, 8:30 AM – 4 PM (APPROXIMATELY)

Caravan south through the grasslands east of I-25 hunting for raptors, eventually arriving at Pueblo Reservoir. There we'll join the activities of Eagle Day, presented by the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Arkansas Valley Audubon Society. Schedule in the past has included: US Air Force Academy Falcons Flight Demo, Raptor Release, and Pueblo Raptor Center Live Birds by Diana Miller. And yes we will scan the area for Bald Eagles, often present at Lake Pueblo this time of year. Bring a sack lunch (food also available at the reservoir), full tanks of gas and plan to be outside for short periods. You can stay all day or go home anytime.

Meet at Broadmoor Towne Center (Nevada and Lake Avenue) east of Starbucks. Pueblo State Park has a required entrance fee.

Contact Gary Conover, (719) 635-2505, for more information and to let him know you are coming.

LA VETA ROSY FINCHES

FEBRUARY 9TH, 7 AM – 3 PM

This annual trip comes as close as possible to guaranteeing Rosy-finches. We also typically see Evening Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches, and Pinyon Jays, along with lots of other species.

Further details are on the Aiken website. Meet at the Tejon & I-25 Park 'n Ride to carpool. This trip will go unless weather makes driving conditions too dangerous.

For more information and to RSVP, contact Debbie Barnes at kfoopoh@yahoo.com or (c) 303.947.0566.



THE COAL INDUSTRY IN COLORADO

by Jackie Heyda

HIGH COUNTRY NEWS IS A MAGAZINE ABOUT THE West. The November 12, 2012 issue had an article about the coal industry in Colorado. This article states that coal is in trouble due to the market's vagaries and the abundance of natural gas from the drilling boom that began ten years ago. Many coal plants were shut down during the Clean Air Act of 1970, and from the activism of the Environmental Protection Agency and environmentalists.

As of last April, coal was providing only 32 percent of the nation's electricity, down from the 1990-2010 average of 50 percent. Many gigawatts of coal power capacity will go offline by 2016. The primary reason for that is cheap natural gas.

In the 1990s, natural gas cycle turbines were improved. They were cheaper and more efficient than coal generators. Natural gas-generating capacity grew between 2000 and 2010. Horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing opened up vast reserves, dropping prices to around \$3.00 per thousand cubic feet.

However, coal is fighting back. Coal monies poured into politics as soon as President Obama took office. President Obama's Interior Department opened land to leasing in the Powder River Basin despite protests from environmental groups. He also delayed the EPA's smog rule. The article states that any administration would probably have trouble ending the war on coal. An administration would have to continue to delay coal ash rules or interfere with the 1978 law that banned the construction of new gas power plants until its repeal in 1987. Natural gas prices would have to be increased by

SHOULD TREES BE FREE TO SAWMILLS?

by Jackie Heyda

VIALE SAWMILLS ARE CONSIDERED IMPORTANT COMPONENTS TO the task of restoring the health of overgrown forests. However, the sawmills require a steady supply of timber. For example, Colorado revived a timber mill on the western slope, but after one month the mill could only afford to run three days a week. They haven't been able to get enough logs.

Democratic Senator Mark Udall is wondering if dead and dying beetle-killed Lodgepole Pines could be cut on public lands at no charge. Currently Forest Service managers must charge loggers market value for trees. This adds costs to labor and diesel. Congressional action would be required to allow selective cutting of trees on public lands at no charge.

However, getting the product from the forest to the mill is expensive. Pines cut from previous contracts sit in piles because moving the trees to mills isn't profitable. Many of these piles are slated to be burned.

Learn more: www.denverpost.com/environment/ci_21762728/sen-udall-pushes-lowering-cost-timber-sawmills

pping demand and the government would probably have to push the use and manufacturing of methane-powered vehicles or subsidize exports.

Western coal is holding its own despite the challenge from natural gas. Demand is helped by the approximately 100 million tons of coal per year exported to Europe and Asia. There are 400 more employees in the Powder River Basin. The North Fork Valley mining area has more miners entering the mines and more coming out than 5 years ago.

The Western natural gas industry is struggling due to all the cheap gas from the east.

Even after all these changes in coal and gas, drilling starts in Colorado are lower than they were a decade ago.

NEWS & NOTES

Earth Justice is a non-profit interest law organization founded in 1971 as the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund. They are dedicated to protecting the places, natural resources, and wildlife of this earth and defending the right of all people to a healthy environment. Their website at earthjustice.org has information about climate change, fracking, and other environmental issues.

The White House website discusses issues pertaining to our natural heritage, national landmarks, emissions, fuel economy standards, and renewable energy. www.WhiteHouse.gov/energy/our-environment.

Sen. Mark Udall's website contains information about Colorado issues: www.markudall.senate.gov.



Accipiters, cont'd. from front page.



SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS

Adult Sharp-shinned Hawks (*above, left*) have a gray back and head, a red chest with white spotting, and a square-tipped tail. A Sharp-shinned Hawk's head is small, giving it the appearance of having no neck. The eyes appear almost centered on the head.

Immature Sharp-shinned Hawks (*above, right*) have bold heavy streaking on their breasts, usually with a pale stripe above the eye. In late winter they start to gain some adult feathers, and their eyes may become a darker orange..

In flight Sharp-shinned Hawks appear to be almost headless. They fly with the wrist of their wings flexed forward. If you were to draw a line from one wrist to the other it would go thru the eyes—their appearance is like a "T." Their flight is very rapid, interspersed with glides. The flapping is so fast you can't count each beat.



Sharpies like wooded areas. They are mostly seen in flight when they pop out above the trees, when traveling between trees, or at your bird feeders in winter.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Aiken Audubon held its Colorado Springs Christmas Bird Count on December 15. Roughly 150 people divided into 33 teams spread across 23 count areas, plus a dozen or so feeder watchers, recorded the number of birds seen throughout the day.

Preliminary results show 98 species seen on count day with an additional three more for count week. Best birds for the day included a first-ever Acorn Woodpecker for our Colorado Springs CBC, and a Palm Warbler!



After a full day of birding, 31 counters met at Bear Creek Nature Center for a "Tally Rally" and potluck dinner, where they swapped stories of where they counted and what they saw.

Thanks to everyone who participated. A full count report will be available at a later date.

COOPER'S HAWKS

Adult Cooper's Hawks have a gray back and a darker gray head, giving them a capped appearance. They have a red chest with white barring and a rounded tail. Cooper's Hawks have a longer neck and tend to move their head around. The eyes appear more in the front of the head.



PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

In flight, their heads project far beyond their wings when soaring, giving a cross-like appearance. They fly with slower wing beats followed by a short glide. The beats can often be counted.

Immature Cooper's Hawks have fine streaking primarily on the upper breast while the lower belly will be mostly white. They too have a capped appearance, with the top of their head being darker brown than their backs.



LEARN MORE

Accipiters can be hard to tell apart, but it gets easier with practice. Go back to the beginning of this article and try IDing the first two images. The answer will be given at Aiken Audubon's January Raptor ID program. Then get some live practice on our Raptor ID field trips. I hope you enjoy your winter visitors more now that you can tell them apart!

ABA 2013 SUMMER YOUNG BIRDER CAMPS

/// Camp Colorado: July 7 through July 13, 2013 at the YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, CO

/// Camp Avocet: August 11 through August 17, 2013 at Camp Henlopen State Park, Lewes, DE

For information on either camp, call Bill Stewart at (800) 850-2473 or email him at bstewart@aba.org.



Look for the Aiken Audubon Society Facebook page!

facebook.com/pages/Aiken-Audubon-Society

Quiz answers: 1-m, 2-h, 3-b, 4-e, 5-f, 6-d, 7-o, 8-t, 9-n, 10-f, 11-l, 12-a, 13-g, 14-k, 15-c.



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You do not have to be a member to participate in Aiken's activities.

FLOCKS, FLEETS, AND FLIGHTS

We all know that birds come in flocks, but did you know they also come in a dissimulation... or a fleet, flight, parcel, or pod? Specific kinds of birds have their own collective nouns as well. Without using outside help, how many can you match up? Answers on page 5.

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Coots | a. Ballet |
| 2. Ducks | b. Convocation |
| 3. Eagles | c. Descent |
| 4. Flamingo | d. Exaltation |
| 5. Jays | e. Flamboyance |
| 6. Larks | f. Huddles |
| 7. Magpies | g. Muster |
| 8. Owls | h. Paddling |
| 9. Pelicans | i. Parliament |
| 10. Penguins | j. Party |
| 11. Sparrows | k. Plump |
| 12. Swans | l. Quarrel |
| 13. Turkeys | m. Raft |
| 14. Waterfowl | n. Squadron |
| 15. Woodpeckers | o. Tiding |

Flores' Funnies



Artist Rick Flores, a Nature Center volunteer, enjoys sharing his views of happenings at Fountain Creek and Bear Creek Nature Centers.